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Sedan investigated for tendency to accelerate

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
Associated Press

DETROIT - The federal government has upgraded an investigation into the 2007 Lexus ES 350 sedan after at least 12 people were injured when the vehicle accelerated without warning.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said in a report issued this week that an all-weather floor mat can trap the throttle pedal when it's not properly secured, resulting in unwanted acceleration. The all-weather floor mat has been found in a majority of the vehicles that reported the problem, the NHTSA said.

Toyota Motor Corp. told the NHTSA it sent a mailing to ES 350 owners in late April warning them about improper installation of the all-weather floor mat. The mat should be secured with clips and shouldn't be placed over the standard floor mat. Toyota also said it changed the labeling on the floor mat.

The NHTSA is now deciding whether Toyota's actions were sufficient. Vehicle investigations can lead to product recalls. There are 98,454 ES 350 sedans on the road.

The NHTSA and Toyota have received 40 complaints about unintended acceleration, the agency said. Eight crashes have been reported, including one that caused a seven-vehicle pileup. In some cases, drivers traveled several miles at speeds of more than 90 mph before they were able to stop, the NHTSA said. The Lexus Customer Service Line can be reached at 1-800-255-3987.

Three other manufacturers have announced product recalls this week:

- About 811,000 Skil brand circular saws with various date codes, manufactured in the U.S. by Robert Bosch Tool Corp., have been recalled because the saw might continue to operate when it's in the locked position after the user releases the trigger. In addition, when the safety switch is on, the product can still be used, which poses a risk.

The recalled circular saws were sold nationwide. They have model numbers 5650, 5700, 5750 and 5755. Consumers should contact the company for a free repair by calling 1-866-761-5572 or going to www.skil.com.

- About 24,000 gold pine cone candle sets, manufactured in Hong Kong and imported by Giftco Inc., have been recalled because the paint on the candles can catch fire. For more information, go to www.cpsc.gov.

- About 37,100 Classic Beautyrest electric warming throw blankets, manufactured in China and imported by International Home Fashions Inc., have been recalled because the blankets can overheat if bunched, folded or tucked, posing a risk of smoldering, melting, fires or burns.

For more information, call 1-800-905-0799 or go to www.intlhomefash.com or www.cpsc.gov.

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